



Ambassador Jeffrey L. Bleich – Nuclear Non Proliferation: A New Start

Remarks of Ambassador Bleich at the Australian Institute for International Affairs, Canberra

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Thank you for that kind introduction. I want to thank both the Australian Institute for International Affairs and the Harvard Club of Australia for hosting this event and having me here to speak with you.

I had kind of a checkered history at Harvard actually. Although I did okay in my classes, my issue was that I started a subversive organization while on campus. It was called the Kennedy School of Government Lampoon. At least that was what it was originally called. Until the other so-called humor magazine on campus had their lawyers, Palmer & Dodge, send us a “cease and desist” letter for using the copyrighted name of “Lampoon.” Apparently, the letter was accompanied by a copy of a federal district court decision two years earlier holding that ABC could not have a program called the ABC Lampoon because Lampoon was a copyrighted name. Now of course, being sharp legal minds, we immediately recognized that KSG and ABC were completely different letters and so that case should have no bearing on our right to publish our magazine. But rather than get into a fight, I wrote them the following letter:

Dear Sirs:

Thank you very much for your “cease and desist” letter on behalf of the Harvard Lampoon and your instructions to forego publishing the KSG Lampoon for fear of confusing the Harvard Lampoon’s readers. Until you wrote we had not realized that the Harvard Lampoon was a humor magazine, or that it actually had readers. Thank you for these clarifications.

It was never our intention to infringe any rights of the Harvard Lampoon or to confuse either of its readers. We are simply a group of graduate students with a dream that we have cleverly turned into a substantial debt. We could have called that deficit many things: “the Reagan budget” or the “Harvard Lampoon board’s sex life,” or “Palmer & Dodge’s billables if they are desperate enough to take on this case.” But instead we chose the pet name: KSG Lampoon.

Since you object to that name, we will agree not to call our future magazine the KSG Lampoon. In fact, instead, we will call it the “Not the KSG Lampoon.” However, we



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hope that you will still go ahead and sue us for everything we have, since we see no other way of obviating our debt.

Yours sincerely,

Jeff Bleich

Editor-in-Chief

So this is what happens when you learn diplomacy at Harvard. In fact, I took diplomacy from Larry Summers.

In a grave somewhere, John Kenneth Galbraith is shaking his head.

Now as most Harvard graduates know the most important thing on any Harvard graduates mind when they come to a party is to let you know that they went to Harvard. So I would like to tell stories tonight with all of the Harvard folks about Harvard. But unfortunately, this event is being co-hosted by AIIA. And these folks actually would like to talk about something substantive. It is a terrible mis-match here.

So I'd like to talk about a serious topic that both I and President Obama are passionate about. It was the subject of the very first significant piece of legislation that President Obama wrote as a U.S. Senator and it has been a subject that he has doggedly pursued since taking federal office and frankly for as long as I've known him. That topic is making the world safe from loose nukes and building a nuclear weapon free world. His success in the past month on advancing this effort is not an accident; it is the product of years of work. President Obama campaigned on reinvigorating U.S. non-proliferation efforts, he made it a priority issue in his Inaugural address, he made it his top priority in the Prague speech in Europe, and it was the subject of his first major White House summit. So today, I'm going to talk about why the President and the United States are so focused on this issue, what is at stake, and what we have accomplished to date.

Before I get there though, we should just pause over what has already been accomplished in just one year. Just over a year ago, in April 2009, President Obama spoke in Prague of his vision of a world free from nuclear weapons. Last month he returned to Prague with President Medvedev of Russia, the leaders of the world's two greatest nuclear powers, and they signed the most significant nuclear arms reduction agreement in the past quarter century. Two weeks after that 47 nations convened in the



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White House and agreed to a concrete set of actions that will increase transparency, enforcement, and will move the world squarely in the direction of eliminating nuclear weapons from our planet. And as we speak today, all of the nations of the world are gathered in the United Nations to conduct a thorough review of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and to move that treaty to the next level.

It will take more than one President's term, and perhaps even more than my lifetime. But the process has begun by which we will once and for all stop the spread of nuclear weapons, eliminate nuclear arsenals, and secure loose nuclear materials so they do not fall into the hands of rogue states and criminal networks. We are, in short, in a still dangerous time, but closer than we have been at any time in the past 65 years to ending nuclear terror.

What Is Driving The Nuclear Agenda

The strange, and the bold, thing about the President's vision is that eliminating nuclear weapons is not a fashionable issue. Military leaders today prefer to focus on the risk of new threats like cyberattacks. Technologists focused on newer technologies like the revolution in energy and clean tech and bio-medicines. Scientists too are less interested in fission and fusion than in the next global threat: climate change. So nuclear weapons seem like a throwback to the Cold War. While nuclear weapons were the foremost threat in the world 20 years ago we have started to view them as a theoretical concern that lives in the past, like mustard gas after WW I. So why would this President, a President who had already inherited one of the most challenging agendas of any world leader in the past century add nuclear weapons as a priority in the first year of his administration?

The reason is both because the source of the threat has changed and because the consequence of the threat hasn't changed. What do I mean by that? The source of the threat has changed. It is true that the threat of a nuclear war between nation states has declined dramatically since the height of the cold war. After investing billions of dollars in a nuclear arms race, the powers of the world that had built their defense systems largely around nuclear power all came to the same conclusion: one best expressed by President Ronald Reagan: "A nuclear war cannot be won and should never be fought." The cost to a nation of initiating a nuclear war was quite simply almost certain annihilation. This made nuclear war an unwinnable war. And so, the nations of the world have moved away from nuclear weapons and no longer see nukes as a path to security.



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But at the same time the threat of a different kind of nuclear attack from a different source has increased – an attack by any one of several criminal terrorist networks. These groups do not have the same concerns of nation states. They do not operate from any particular nation and they have no government. If they obtain nuclear weapons and launch a nuclear strike there is no place for the rest of the world to deliver a counter-strike. As a result, these groups have shown a keen interest in obtaining nuclear weapons. That, combined with their willingness to indiscriminately kill civilians using a whole range of other unconventional weapons – commercial planes, suicide bombers, poison gases, or other WMDs – means that the risk of actual use of a nuclear weapon has never been greater. The only question is whether they can get access. After the fall of the Soviet Union, we know that significant nuclear stockpiles remain unaccounted for and are being actively sought by terrorists. And so while the threat of one kind of nuclear attack has declined, the threat of a different kind of nuclear attack has never been greater.

At the same time, the significance of the threat hasn't changed. After September 11 we now know to be true what we always feared: that a large-scale terror attack will not simply take thousands potentially hundreds of thousands or millions of lives, but it will change forever how we live and the things we hold most dear. I lived in Washington DC before September 11. Back then members of the public could tour the White House, joggers could run up and down the stairs of the Capitol, tour buses drove alongside the Supreme Court building. You could arrive at the airport 15 minutes before your flight and still catch the flight. The Government could not tap your phone without a warrant. We did not have special detention facilities. There was more freedom, open-ness, trust, and commitment to privacy. After September 11, that changed utterly. And that was an attack that killed under 3,000 people. A nuclear attack anywhere in the world could kill hundreds of thousands. And the goal of terrorists who would take those lives is not simply to kill those people, but to kill our faith and confidence that we can be safe while respecting human rights and civil liberties. Their goal is to set back our Constitution, and all of the values that we have fought for, so that we lose the very things that hold us together.

The President's vision is this – if we want to save humanity from the most destructive and catastrophic threat we face, we need to eliminate nuclear weapons so that they cannot fall into the hands of terrorists.

The United States has a special responsibility to lead this effort as the nation with the largest nuclear arsenal and as the only nation that has ever used a nuclear weapon in a conflict. We cannot remove this threat worldwide unless we take the initiative.

Nuclear Posture Review



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The first concrete step in removing nuclear weapons is reducing our own reliance on nuclear weapons in our security strategy. This doesn't mean immediately dismantling all of our nuclear weapons. Our first priority has to be protecting our allies, and until we have an alternative, nuclear weapons remain an important deterrent. At the same time we need to demonstrate leadership in both being transparent about our nuclear posture and begin reducing our nuclear arsenal in a sustainable way. One month ago we did both by issuing an updated, and for the first time, unclassified, Nuclear Posture Review. I won't go into all of the details of the Review because I like the AIIA folks too much, and it would be too difficult for some of the Yale grads to follow. But I do want to highlight a few key points.

First, the Review is specific. It lays out specific steps to stop proliferation, and to accelerate the timeline for securing loose nukes. It also renews the U.S. commitment to hold accountable any actor, state or otherwise, that facilitates nuclear terrorism.

Second, the U.S. updated our declaratory policy to encourage other nations to join the non-proliferation treaty, by reducing our own nuclear threat. Over the past decade we have developed other ways to deter certain kinds of catastrophic threats, so that we don't need a nuclear threat as a deterrent. For that reason, the United States has committed that it will no longer use, or threaten to use, nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states that are party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and who comply with their nuclear nonproliferation obligations.

This is a clear message to get countries to swear off nuclear weapons, and live up to the tenets of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. States that fail to comply will find themselves isolated as pariahs in the community of nations. In a world where security is measured by whether you have more friends than enemies, the pursuit of nuclear weapons will not make them more secure.

Third, the updated Nuclear Posture Review commits the U.S. to walk the walk away from a nuclear defense strategy. To that end, it declares that the United States will not develop new nuclear warheads. We will not pursue new military missions for nuclear weapons. We will not conduct nuclear testing. And we will seek ratification of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.

New START Treaty

Now the second major step has been the New Start Treaty. Only a year after President Obama's first Prague speech, he returned to the Czech capital to sign the



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historic New START Treaty with President Medvedev of Russia. This is the most significant new arms control treaty in a quarter century.

The U.S. and Russia are by far the two great nuclear powers. Their arsenals account for 90% of the world's nuclear weapons. Under this agreement, they've committed to reduce their arsenals of strategic warheads by 30 percent. When this treaty is fully implemented, it will mean these nations have the lowest number of deployed nuclear warheads since the 1950s. The Treaty also meets the Reagan standard of "trust but verify." It has a strong verification system that includes on-site inspections in both Countries.

One of the most important implications of the new START Treaty's though is its effect outside of Washington and Moscow. By reducing our stockpiles, the New START sets the stage for other nations that have purely defensive concerns to begin reducing their stockpiles soon.

Nuclear Security Summit

The third part of the nuclear non-proliferation effort was the nuclear security summit in D.C. last month. An unprecedented 47 world leaders gathered in Washington in April to commit to concrete actions to reduce nuclear threats. To put the significance of this summit in perspective, this is the first time since the end of the World War 65 years ago that so many heads of state and government convened in the United States for a single effort.

Again, I won't go into all of the details, but the bottom line is that these world leaders, including Australia's delegation, came together to commit to the highest level ever of nuclear security. The highlights are: (1) a plan to secure all vulnerable nuclear material in four years, and (2) commitments by each nation to take specific concrete steps, such as Ukraine's pledge to eliminate its entire uranium stockpile.

Non-Proliferation Review Conference

Finally the Fourth major step is underway. As we speak, the UN Non-Proliferation Review Conference is going on right now in New York. Nearly 190 nations have gathered at the UN in New York, and the U.S. is pushing all parties to strengthen the three pillars of the agreement: non-proliferation, disarmament, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy.



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In short, in the past year we have reengaged the world on one of the most important issues to our common humanity. The Non-Proliferation Review Conference is not just about one country; it is about every Country.

Iran and North Korea

Now, it is not possible to finish talking about this subject without mention two Countries: Iran and North Korea.

When we think about risks, we can't ignore the risk that a nuclear Iran or a nuclear North Korea poses to the world. Iran's persistent and flagrant violation of the non-proliferation treaty, its secret enrichment program, its support for terrorism, and its President's specific threats to Israel are a significant piece of why the nations of the world need to come together and condemn and stop nuclear proliferation. Likewise, North Korea's flagrant violation of the treaty, its pursuit of nuclear capability, and its testing of systems to carry nuclear weapons have to be stopped.

The United States had actively engaged with allies such as Australia to increase the costs of Iran's and North Korea's failure to live up to their international obligations. But we have also engaged with other non-allied powers including China and Russia to bring Iran into line. To date we have obtained UN Security Council sanctions against both. But since those sanctions have not yet caused either Iran or North Korea to change their postures, we are continuing to ratchet up the consequences.

As the President has stated, we recognize the difference between the people of these nations and the leadership of their Country. The people of Iran were out in droves after the election protesting and they were ruthlessly attacked, beaten, and in some cases killed by their own government. They understand the reckless course that their leaders are taking and they want it stopped too. So our challenge is in part to design sanctions in a way that inflicts the punishment where it belongs – on the architects and beneficiaries of the nuclear program and not the public. If Iran's leadership continues to violate their international obligations, they will only find themselves more isolated not only from the world community but also from their own people. We hope Iran's leaders will take the necessary steps to restore the international community's confidence in the solely peaceful nature of their nuclear program. But if they don't, there will be real consequences. The same is true for North Korea. Kim Jong-Il must stop his nuclear program or he'll be forced to stop.

I'll repeat what President Obama has stated. The United States is determined to prevent Iran and North Korea from developing nuclear weapons. But we won't do it through threats and bluster. We are going to do it by circling the wagons around these nations,



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ratcheting the pressure, and using the combined force of many nations to stop their programs by whatever means are necessary.

So as we take stock over the first year and a half of the Obama Administration, we have accomplished quite a bit. But we still have much work to do. Terrorist networks and certain nations threaten to take us backward. But working together, the U.S., Australia, and other like-minded nations can make this a world free of fear from nuclear weapons, and pass on to our children and grandchildren a safer, more peaceful world.

Thank you.